

# Humanizing Musical Education: Dialogical Pedagogy Contributions

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The present paper brings a reflection about an intervention and research that provides a permanent and reflective feedback on the projects “Music Education at UFSCar” and “Writing the Future Project—(Re)cutting papers, creating panels”, both developed in cities in the interior of Brazil, which share what is called “humanizing music education”, having as main theoretical-methodological contribution the dialogical pedagogy, as proposed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. As methodology of this review article, a bibliographical research was carried out, explaining that it is the purpose of this study to describe what humanizing musical education means in the projects under consideration. The results show that committed extension projects, linked to equally committed research, favor a permanent movement of thinking about doing with a view to improving the know-how, in order to promote a humanizing and therefore transforming musical education, also enabling to break with the asymmetries of power, between educators and participants, valuing permanent critical and emancipatory dialogue, as a strategy focused on meaningful and transformative learning in musical education, in respectful, loving and sincere coexistence with others.

*Keywords:* music education, dialogical pedagogy, coexistence

## Introduction

Intervention and research have been performed, which permanently and reflectively feedback on the extension projects “Musical Education in UFSCar”, developed by the Musicalization Laboratory in the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar), campus of the city of São Carlos, in the interior of the State of São Paulo, since 1989, as well as in the “Writing the Future Project—(Re)cutting papers, creating panels”, developed by the University of the State of Minas Gerais (UEMG), campus of the city of Ituiutaba, the interior of the State of Minas Gerais, since 2007. Such extension projects share what is called “humanizing musical education”, having as the main methodological and theoretical support the dialogical pedagogy, as proposed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1967; 2005; 2008), also based upon the specific authors in the musical education field, like Gainza (1988), Green (2009), Higgins (2012), Kater (2004), Koellreutter (1996), and Souza (2014).

A bibliographical research is used in this article (Gil, 1991), developed from previously elaborated material, specially books and scientific articles, including the ones developed together with the extension

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projects “Musical Education in UFSCar” and “Writing the Future Project—(Re)cutting papers, creating panels”, aiming at describing humanizing musical education in such projects and enabling a better understanding, in order to do so frequent examples of the actions performed in them will be brought to light.

### **Theoretical and Methodological Reference of the Humanizing Musical Education**

Music, according to Green (2009), always comprises inspiration and communication among people, musicians, and between musicians and the public. The author states that this communication and expression abilities which can inspire people with energy and intensity start with the exercise, expression, and musicalization techniques in the childhood, and such process is called musical education.

Concerning humanizing musical education, it is understood as being the whole musical doing which surpasses the sheer notion of musical instrumentation and theory, comprising other dimensions of knowing how to do, such as political, social, and cultural issues, mainly in social projects, once it includes the acoustic, structural, and emotional dimensions promoting people’s involvement and the feeling of being able to (Souza, 2014; Kater, 2004).

Within the perspective of this so called “humanizing musical education”, the context where it is developed has always had as its main scenario the community groups. Community groups are people who group together around the musical making, forming smaller groups which coexist regularly with the purpose of meeting and together embrace a musical practice. The pleasure of making music together is the highest experience that moves this or that group, always searching for sensitive music outcomes and overcoming minor conflicts and difficulties.

Higgins (2012) understood the concept of community art, or else community music as the one in which people articulate, engage, and show their needs, experiences, and aspirations. The work methodology which involves these groups, claims the author, regards not only the artistic context in its potential, but also, and mainly, the human development of their participants.

Thus, musical education under the humanizing perspective devotes to individuals and their specific characteristics, and at the same time, to groups. Therefore, in the context of both extension projects, the musical education, and social practice happens through meetings with those who are interested in learning and teaching music in a shared, communitarian, horizontal, and dialogical way, in which groups acquire an ample dimension, where everybody interacts, coexist, and together build an identity, in which educators teach and also learn, and the same is true about the projects participants, in which everyone sets off from their readymade knowledge experience (Freire, 1999; 2005; 2008) towards overcoming with a respectful, stimulating, and committed support from all the group members in a constant collaborative action, so that all of them who coexist could become more.

Being, therefore, like Freire (2005), inconclusive and incomplete, who is always being, making, and remaking itself in the inter-subjectivity relations with other beings in the background of world context

aware of what I can know socially and historically, I also know that I cannot escape historical continuance. Knowledge has history. It never is, it is always being (...) History is as come to be as we are (...), as is the knowledge we produce. (...) It would be impossible to think of a world where human experience happened outside continuance, I mean outside History. (Freire, 2001, p. 18)

Still in accordance with Freire (1992), the human being is a being of action and reflection, of practices and when related to another being and to the world transforms and transforms itself.

Gonçalves Junior (2009, p. 705) presented Freire’s dialogical pedagogy in three moments equally

primordial and inter-related, which are:

Theme-investigation: (...) discover what people already know, what they understand about the world and which subject/theme affects and interests them (promoting a generating theme). Learning what they know improves knowledge together, educating and self-educating, from the readymade knowledge experience;

Theme-making: (...) educator is the one who encourages and motivates with a word, a generating theme. Dialogues are necessary to realize attitudes, positions, distinctive points of view, ways of perceiving the world, and in equal manner share knowledge;

Problem-making: (...) moment of engaging, sympathetic emancipating commitment of that knowledge, of the building-rebuilding the understood world, of the life conditions transformation, of freedom.

Ribeiro claimed that (2009) the use of methodologies based upon the dialogical approach of Paulo Freire enabled that the realized experiences are underlined from the "(...) collective aspect of an exercise built upon different knowledge and musical practices" (p. 108); a collective knowledge. Yet, such practices find in Freire's thoughts, the adequate grounds to reflect upon "(...) the necessity of an educational practice (...) being open to diversity and to the different social-musical contexts in which learners are involved" (p. 109).

In light of such inspiration, one can understand the meetings of both extension projects in musical education with moments of equal collective learning in which educators and participants have something to teach and learn, with a potential to share musical knowledge, of general education as well as life.

In coexistence, everyone learns and teaches reciprocally, as Brandão (2003) stated, a learning community is built, in which the smaller learning unit is not each person, each participant or educator individually, but the group who does the shared task of building shared knowledge. It is the small learning community, through which each participant lives their own learning, as everyone has something to say or hear, learn, and teach.

Understanding living in harmony is highlighted with Oliveira's statement (2009, p. 5),

Coexisting is to dive in the living educational, health, survival, and fighting processes, which researchers or professionals are to understand. Coexisting means knowing human life in constant movement: at times smooth, at others rough; at times slow, at others troubled; at times soft, at others suffocating, at times harmonic, and at other deafening. Lives, experiences, friendships, tastes, smells, sounds, words, colors, tears, and smiles make a Web that lull researchers and professionals integrating them to the movements of living and redirecting their look to new perspectives, views of the world.

That is, valuing the permanent critical and emancipating dialogue as a strategy of an education towards meaningful and transforming learning, in a respectful, loving, and honest coexistence of a being with another. Having another being, as taught by Levinas (2005), as a criterion, it is not enough to acknowledge others existence, but having a firm ethical attitude with respect and acknowledgement of otherness, attentively and committedly observing the intersection of our own experiences to those of others in the exercise of inter-subjectivity in the humanizing musical practice because:

The phenomenological world is not the pure being, but the meaning that appears in the intersection of my experiences and of those to the one of others, through the gearing of one with the other, it is therefore, inseparable from subjectivity and inter-subjectivity that form their unit when retaking my past experiences in my present ones, of others' experiences to my own. (Merleau-Ponty, 2015, p. 18)

In such perspective, coexistence understood that way becomes a great educational opportunity, once

(...) it does not erase or nullify differences. On the contrary, it is the ability of collecting them, and letting them be, and still living with them and not despite of them. Coexistence only surges when differences become relative in favor of

points in common. Then, the necessary coexistence surges, the concrete basis for a peaceful coexistence, although there will always be some tension due to legitimate differences. (Boff, 2006, p. 33)

Thereby, concerning humanizing musical education people are grouped, welcoming those who want to make music, regardless of their moment performance level, wish and have the potential for knowing and becoming more.

In agreement with that, the musical educator Koellreutter (1996, p. 3) believed that music teaching in general should go beyond the already existent possibilities, in a relentless rhythm of search, in times and places where creativity had a primordial space of

(...) behaving in front of the world, not as in front of an object, but as an artist facing a piece to create” believing the latent power and capable of transforming and engender new realizations. We also share the understanding of Gainza that all activities must be seen as a means of expression regardless of the degree or level of perfection, at which they were, performed “Expressing yourself is, therefore, showing your deficiencies as well as your abilities.

In this way, for the routine of both extension projects some fundamental principles were adopted:

1. Relevance of the affective bonding which is the basis for the interpersonal relationship and generates trust as a basic condition for learning;
2. Pliability of the pedagogical process (without losing its rigor), given the relative difficulty in focusing and the need for another time to approach or solve problems;
3. Adequacy, organization, and balance between individual and collective actions;
4. Intensifying playfulness in the teaching and learning processes, favoring a warm atmosphere, where emotions and feelings are welcome;
5. Need of individual and collective evaluation, through assessing procedures built together, which respect each one’s timing, at the same time, being honest, critically identifying ways for improvement, and observing personal potentials and other possibilities to explore materials and activities;
6. Whenever needed and through collective evaluation adapt the proposal to the level of the participants, changing the original plan, so that everyone can proceed together in the musical learning.

### **Humanizing Musical Education Practices**

Some researches have been published in the humanizing perspective, gradually building both academic and scientific texts. Besides, congresses and scientific meetings in which some research of that nature have been presented in the last International Society for Music Education (ISME) Conference in Glasgow, Scotland (Martins & Gonçalves, 2017). The above cited show work developed with community groups of children, babies, and their families, “crying” groups, orchestras, and others (Joly & Severino, 2016).

Hereby, there is a description of the research in humanizing musical education with children in the city of São Carlos-São Paulo. For this paper, the methodology adopted in the groups of babies and their families (Music Within the Family) is approached regarding the extension project “Musical Education in UFSCar”, which lasts for one hour in modules of 15 weekly lessons in a semester.

The words delighting, coexistence, lovingness, practice, commitment, and humanizing appear as stepping stones towards the path to be followed. They are along the way, causing trouble, and yet, appear as lights which indicate the ground to support each one of the methodological steps.

From this principle, music brings the basic elements to knowledge of the world and life. Music helps us

better understand the world we are inserted in, both from the point of view of culture and of the daily small things, because in the bosom of the project, it is understood that music is an open-door to the world which begins to unfold during early childhood. The daily scenes, the surroundings where children live, the local and regional culture, the small families scenes are fundamental themes raised together with families, according to what Freire (1967; 2005) and Gonçalves Junior (2009) described in the theme investigation, to enable the conduction of the humanizing musical education meetings, which, in their turn, help the children to enter and understand the world they are inserted in.

In this way, when the music for each meeting is chosen and the script is written, there is first intensive research, with many books spread on the table, searching for songs that are meaningful for this or that group of children. Each child is unique, with their preferences, potentials, and limits. Each one of them is considered when planning the humanizing musical education meetings. On the other hand, the group as a whole is also considered as for which activities are going to be applied. Groups also have their specifics as there is a diversity of children in them. Resuming what Brandão stated (2003) that the music groups are seen as a learning community in which everyone has something to teach and learn. Hence, in every meeting the families are brought into the space, so that this learning community broadens and extends after each meeting to their daily lives and to the areas where they live.

Here, lies the description of the research in humanizing musical education with children in the city of Ituiutaba-Minas Gerais. According to Martins (2015), the “Writing the Future Project—(Re)cutting papers, creating panels” is an extension project of UEMG in partnership with the State Music Conservatory Dr. José Zóccoli de Andrade, whose interventions involve musical and artistic activities (sound events, cultural excursions, and artistic workshops) performed cohort with students, ranging from 9 to 12 years old, of the State School Governador Bias Fortes, located in the city of Ituiutaba, Minas Gerais, Brazil, which are in integral education<sup>1</sup>.

The project encloses building performances in music, drama, and literature. Among these constructions, there is interpretation, creation, and musical writing from a reference literature chosen by the very people from the participating communities, among students and teachers at the university, regular school, and music conservatory. In a project made of people and institutions, the unifying principle is that of respect towards differences and diversity, based upon the dialogical pedagogy (Freire, 1967; 2005; 2008).

The humanizing musical education practice in the project is basically carried out in three moments: theme-raising (musical and literary repertoire choosing, timetabling of meetings and presentations, negotiating attributions, and responsibilities); theme-making (musical arrangements elaboration, literature script writing, and action plan designing); and problem-making (daily basis of the performance building and rebuilding). These moments are equally primordial and interrelated, according to what is seen in Gonçalves Junior (2009), once it concerns collaborative practices in which there is no imposition or hierarchizing of knowledge, but access and opening to the new, be it in tastes, wishes, or insights expressed by the participants. So much so that Freire’s (2005) viability is instituted, as a possibility of happening, hearing, and making happen, amplifying (audible/perceivable/visible) voices yet unheard.

### Considerations

Having in mind that this article aimed at describing humanizing musical education in the extension

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<sup>1</sup> Integral education is a pedagogical intervention program of the Educational Board of the State of Minas Gerais, Brazil (SEE/MG/BR), whose objective is to remediate students’ learning difficulties.

projects “Musical Education in UFSCar” and “Writing the Future Project—(Re)cutting papers, creating panels”, in an attempt to better understand such practice, it could be considered that the humanizing musical education social practice inspired by the dialogical pedagogy, demands commitment, engaging, and responsibility from their practitioners, as well as permanent search for knowledge and abilities, creative, and cooperative interaction in the coexistence of different people.

It is considered that musical practices, much more than promoting the increase in the levels of attention, memorization, and concentration, so necessary to making music, are latent forces in the revelation of easiness and difficulties in learning, socialization, and social interaction, showing themselves as powerful contributing agents in the processes of social, cultural, and political constitution of children, adolescents, and adults.

Learning to sing, play, act, read, and play are features of the investigated phenomenon, observing that the educational processes derived from such practices surpass the simply learning education, when they imply the promotion of sensitive education and humanizing transformation, a place where no one teaches anyone, but learning happens in communion (Freire, 2005; 2008).

The educational processes derived from these practices in musical education revealed themselves as strongly marked by the spirit of collaboration, coexistence, sympathy, respect, and acknowledgement of others. Such results show that extension projects committed, tied to research as committed favor a permanent movement of thinking doing in order to improve know-how, to promote a humanizing musical education, and therefore, transforming, enabling the rupture with power symmetry, between educators and participants, valuing the permanent critical and emancipating dialogue, as a strategy towards meaningful, and transforming learning in musical education, in the respectful, loving and honest coexistence with others, in being more in communion, in “(...) existence sympathy” (Freire, 2005, p. 86).

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